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TAGS: PREL CU EU
SUBJECT: FRENCH VIEWS ON U.S.-CUBA RELATIONS AND THE EU

Classified By: CHIEF OF MISSION JONATHAN FARRAR FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND
 (D)

¶1. (C) Chief of Mission (COM) had lunch with French
Ambassador Frederic Dore on March 10 to seek his perspective
on recent changes within the Government of Cuba, the pace of
the EU-Cuba political dialogue, and U.S.-Cuban relations.
France is a key player among EU missions here and held the
local EU presidency for all of 2008.

THE GOC SHAKE-UP and U.S. RELATIONS

¶2. (C) Ambassador Dore took a line similar to that of many of
our diplomatic interlocutors, namely that the changes
reflected Raul Castro putting his own people into place.
Dore also speculated that there would be additional changes
within the GOC over the next few months. He emphasized the
difficulty he and his embassy have in getting a fix on views
within the GOC hierarchy. COM noted the increasing role of
the military within the Council of Ministers and Vice
Presidents. Ambassador Dore said he finds the GOC civilian
leadership to be very closed-mouthed and the military is
impenetrable. France's military attache is resident in
Mexico, but Dore opined that it would make no difference were
he to be stationed here full time.

¶3. (C) Ambassador Dore said he believed the shake-up in good
part was aimed at preparing for a potential GOC dialogue with
the United States. Foreign Minister Rodriguez and Minister
of Foreign Investment and Trade Malmierca both were former
United Nations Permanent Representatives with long experience
in New York, and in Dore's view know well the United States
(Dore himself served in New York prior to coming to Havana).
He said he believes the GOC now is waiting for the United
States to make the first move.

¶4. (C) COM asked how the GOF and the EU would respond to
potential changes in U.S. policy along the lines of those
discussed during the Presidential campaign and the
Secretary's confirmation hearings. Ambassador Dore said that
the GOF, and probably the EU as well, would respond
positively. COM asked what was meant by statements from
French "Special Envoy" Jack Lang that France wished to be the
"motor" for U.S.-Cuban talks. Dore admitted that he did not
really know what such a role might entail, and said he did
not have instructions for potential follow-up actions. He
said that the principal purpose of Lang's visit was to
discuss bilateral issues.

THE EU and CUBA

¶5. (C) COM asked Ambassador Dore to evaluate the progress of
the EU-Cuba dialogue begun following the EU's change in its
common position toward Cuba in June 2008. The ambassador
noted that France had played a key role in getting the
dialogue underway during the French EU presidency. He said
there had been little progress to date on issues such as
Cuba's ratification and implementation of UN conventions or
on the release of political prisoners. Nevertheless, Dore
added that Cuba had taken several positive steps in the
run-up to the EU decision last June and that it was
conceivable that similar progress might be made in the three
months remaining before the EU meets to evaluate the
dialogue's progress.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) Ambassador Dore was realistic regarding the EU-Cuba
dialogue but many in the EU will be tempted to give the GOC a
pass in June to facilitate the continuation of the dialogue.
  Should the Administration announce changes in our policy
toward Cuba, USINT recommends that we approach the EU and
friends in this hemisphere to ask that they respond
positively and put pressure on the GOC to respond with
positive moves of its own. END COMMENT.

FARRAR